Lebanon
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MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

SUBJECT: Lebanon

PLACE: President's Residence, Beirut

PARTICIPANTS:

United States	Lebanon
The Honorable John Foster DULLES, Secretary of State	His Excellency Camille CHAMOUN, President of the Republic of Lebanon
The Honorable Harold STASSEN, Director, Mutual Security Administration	
The Honorable Harold B. MINOR, Ambassador to Lebanon	

After the usual exchange of greetings, President CHAMOUN said he desired to make a statement. He declared that we are now at a cross-road in relations between the West and the Arab East. He feared that if no positive results are obtained from the Secretary's visit, the area will fall apart. It reveals elements of dangerous weakness. He assured the Secretary there is no hatred or deep-rooted hostility toward the United States in the Arab world, but rather a feeling of bitter disappointment as a result of Palestine. The United States appears to be another big power dominated by politicians anxious to serve local needs. The situation, he declared, has elements which make it easy to improve.

President CHAMOUN, in speaking of the British, said that British friends in the Near East are becoming increasingly few, especially since the events in Cairo and Churchill's speech. The only answer in Egypt, he said, is complete evacuation of the British. This, he said, is agreed upon by both sides and the questions remain only of the technicians to remain, care of the base, and return in case of a threat of war. The United States, the President said, should find a solution and impose it on both sides. To make this palatable to the Egyptians, the United States should give military and economic aid to Egypt.

Replying to this phase of the President's statement Mr. DULLES declared that the question for us is one of keeping the base ready in case of war or threat of war. If the British leave Suez, there will

be vast

be vast losses and the base will quickly deteriorate. It is probable that sixty to ninety days would be required to make it ready again. Thus the base's use as a deterrent against Soviet Russia would be lost. The Secretary elaborated the thesis of the great responsibility of the United States in the world today in being the principal barrier against Soviet aggression. To fulfill this responsibility, the United States has created deterrents to Soviet aggression. Suez is one of these important bases and we cannot afford to see it put out of order for a critical period. Mr. DULLES said that our military authorities believe Egypt cannot adequately maintain the base. We cannot look with equanimity on such a situation. The Secretary declared that Egypt should be satisfied with the overwhelming triumph she would have on seeing the British withdraw. He asked why the Arabs did not come forward with a genuine security pact tied to the West which would create an arrangement making possible protection of the base by a group of powers without the onus of infringement of sovereignty.

President CHAMOUN expressed himself as entirely in accord with the idea of a defense pact. The first step, however, is to find a solution for the Suez problem which would make it possible to set up such a pact and escape from the present vicious circle.

Secretary DULLES told the President that he is actively considering the problem and will continue to do so when he returns. The problem is technical and military and will require some time. He said he had begged Naguib to understand this and not get impatient.

President CHAMOUN agreed and said he would use his influence with Naguib and others to be patient. He declared, however, that the situation is urgent since shooting may start in Egypt and this will have an effect on the whole area. Returning to the theme of the British, President CHAMOUN said that not even Iraq would dare renew a treaty with the British. The British, he added, must realize that times have changed and this is not the Victorian period.

Secretary DULLES agreed that times have changed, but in more ways than one. No nation exercises total independence. While Egypt demands there be no foreign troops on Egyptian soil, we have troops in England because the British realize we are dependent upon each other. The Secretary said that if Egypt is unwilling to cooperate for the defense of the free world, she probably will not have her independence for long. This type of nationalism is as dead as imperialism.

Turning

Turning to the question of Palestine, President CHAMOUN said that while Egypt is almost entirely interested in Egypt, Palestine is the more important question here and in the Arab world. There can be, he said, no true Arab cooperation from the heart as long as the Palestine and refugee problems remain unsolved. He referred to the three U.N. resolutions and said that while he does not know the United States attitude on these resolutions, he believes that they must be enforced if there is to be peace. He declared that it is not necessary to live up to them 100%--possibly 60% would be acceptable to the Arabs. In his opinion, United States support of these resolutions would have a profound, favorable effect on friendly relations with the United States. The Arab refugees must go back to their properties or receive other property in compensation. The President then said that if cooperation with the West becomes possible, the United States should give economic and military aid to the Arab world, recognizing that defense of the Near East is a matter for the Arabs.

Secretary DULLES said the United States is sympathetic toward military aid to countries which need it and will make the proper use of it. The demands against the United States in this respect are enormous. All nations want help, our budget is unbalanced, and material is short.

He said we have abandoned the concept of the year of greatest peril, that is, building up to peak effort with the idea that some particular year will be the critical one. The Eisenhower theory is that one can't determine the year of greatest peril and that our military effort must therefore be constant and long range. One of the greatest dangers is that overemphasis will wreck the economies of the free world. That would, in fact, be the year of greatest danger. Therefore, we must be careful of our military resources and are not seeking to give them away. We are anxious to see the creation of adequate security arrangements in the Near East but have rather given up the idea of MEDO as previously conceived. A defense arrangement here needs a hard core of Arab strength and Arab willingness to join the free world in defense against communism. The Arab League, he said, seems to have been an organization without serious purpose, confined to passing resolutions and denouncing. If it could turn into something real for the purpose of composing differences, we would be happy. President CHAMOUN said that the interests of the West are very great in this part of the world and therefore the United States should help in every way possible to bring strength and stability here. It should be possible, he said, to devise a scheme of defense agreeable to the Arabs and to the Western world.

Secretary DULLES

Secretary DULLES reiterated our desire to give help and bring stability. He declared, however, that we must express real concern when we hear Arabs say there is no communist threat, merely the threat of Israel and the imperialist powers.

President CHAMOUN said that while this view may be expressed by some persons, it is certainly not the general case. People here are well aware of the communist danger and are willing to play their part if the immediate pressing problems of Egypt and Palestine can be solved.

As the meeting broke up, Mr. SPRAGUE urged upon President CHAMOUN the need for endeavoring to understand our situation and to use moderation and patience. President CHAMOUN replied that this was indeed his policy and that he had been somewhat successful at this in his conversations and visits in the Arab world.